Explosion

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Explosion

by celestialcello

Summary

Hannibal Lecter, who also happened to belong to the rank of nobility for whatever reason that did not concern Will, was not a particularly hideous sight to behold by common standard. Even in their world where appearance mattered little to most, he was admired for his unusually impressive demeanour complemented by his sculpted countenance.

The man was practically beaming when he saw the owner of the shop with his headful of black curls and grumpy face adorned with a pair of unnecessary glasses.
‘Hello Will, it’s good to see you again. May I come in?’

‘You may if you are here to make a purchase, Mr. Lecter,’ Will gritted his teeth and put an emphasise on the title. ‘Otherwise, I would suggest that we bid each other a good morning of sleep. It is getting colder and I would not dare to waste your precious time.’

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Or, alternatively: How not to court your local potion shop sorcerer. Prompt list from tarmasz on instagram! (https://www.instagram.com/tarmasz/?hl=en)

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

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Passing through the intricate web of back alleys and unlit roads, under the rising harvest moon, it was the annual opening of the only magic potion shop in Baltimore. There was never any patterns to its locations. The shop would simply appear under the whim of its owner, carving out a place for itself inside one of the walls filled to the brim with graffitis, sex hotline ads and piss marks. From the seams of the gridded window a subtle hint of calyptus drifted out like shapeless fairies gliding through the air, washing back all the grimes and mucks along the street. To the knowing eyes, for the rest of the month the whole city was covered in the silvery allure of magic. To the most, however, they would simply walk pass its beechwood door wondering if they had caught a whiff of a particularly attractive perfume.

The first night tended to be quieter, so Will has found himself a comfortable position beside the heater *(of course he uses heater - sorcerers are not savages!)*. Well, to be frank, it was a fireplace that was disguised into one, but from time to time it was nice to introduce a little facade of modernity, even if you were Will. After all, an one-hundred-year shift in a city could be a bit dull if one held onto traditions too tightly. If everything went well, this would be his last year in North America, much to his delight. The Association had approved his request to a post in Italy, somewhere by the sea. His thought gradually drifted away to the merpeople, and began to mentally sift through his collections for anything worthy of trading. Perhaps a Snow spell, this must be something novel… Or would they prefer the Meteor Blade, if they are a tribe of warriors. Suddenly he couldn't wait for the last month to end.

He would miss the city, though, with its lovely customers who were always willing to pay a bit extra for high-quality potions, especially when Will was pretty sure that some items on his catalogue has become a personal exclusive offering as time passed. Some of his formulae had unfortunately stopped working due to the change of Season, although each Season always brought with it her own brand of magic. In this case, Chaos, one of his favourite signs. Illusions, ecstasy, akrasia, rage, these were tailor-made for his target market, where skirmishes, conspiracies and murders were never in short supply. And as the town's star sorcerer, Will had been able to secure for himself a few valuable favours for the future.

Sure, there were those he despised, like Chilton and Lounds who almost exclusively only came in at the end of the month to scavenge any bargains they could. But most have been decent customers who respected Will's need for privacy and knew not to lie to him.

'I heard that no mind is closed to you, Mr. Graham. Do you want to take a guess why I am here today?' That was Mrs. Umeda's question on her first visit to Will's shop some eighty years ago.

Will gave her a lopsided grin behind the safety of his counter, 'You want your husband's life, madam. What has he stolen from you? I have just the right potions: one for Tracing, one for Revealing, and the last one would be up to your discretion.'

'Why stealing?' Mrs. Umeda enquired, holding a clutch bag elegantly.

‘The only reason why a powerful witch like you would need me was a stolen Seal that embodied your contract with the World Behind The Sun. You are a Sun witch, aren’t you? Half of your power is now lost with it, hence why your visit today.’

She laid out six gold coins between them. ‘The last potion shall be Suffocation.’

‘That will be just a minute, madam. Pleasure doing business with you.’

‘The pleasure’s all mine, Mr. Graham. May I ask, would the opening hour always be the Harvest Moon?’

‘You got it ma’am, for the next a hundred years.’

‘And I welcome you on behalf of Baltimore.’

~*~

The arms of his cuckoo clock were moving closer and closer to 5am, the usual hour of a rooster’s call as well as his conventional closing time until the moon rose again. He laid down the tome he was mindlessly flipping through back onto its position on the bookshelf behind the recliner. Time for some elderflower tea, he decided. And just as he was getting up to trudge into the small kitchen he set up at the back, the bell chimed cheerfully, sending waves of dread for his disrupted teatime throughout Will’s heart.

As a result, he wasn’t sure if he was exactly wearing an amicable smile when he answered the door. But after all these time, he has earned the privilege for eccentricity. And the sight at the other side of the threshold certainly did not cheer him up.

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‘Hello Will, it’s good to see you again. May I come in?’

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‘A friendly conversation is in itself a form of transaction, don’t you agree? Also, please, call me Hannibal.’

‘Duly noted. Request declined with my utmost regret, sir. I run a potion shop, not a crisis night-line.’ Will was suddenly too tired to even form coherent sentences. He knew that sarcasm was rude, and Hannibal was known for upholding the standard of courtesy (by murdering those who failed his test). However, after all the incessant pestering and what he

had done to his shop on more than one occasions, a chance to ruffle Hannibal's feather might as well be worth his life.

Hannibal sighed good-naturedly. The halo of light from inside the shop streamed into his eyes and dyed them into a warm mixture of hazel and amber.

'I understand that this would be your last year in our city. I was hoping to make up for all the inconveniences caused by remiss on my part.' While the words sounded like pure bullshit to Will's ear, there was something sincere and fidgeting underlying Hannibal's composed look tonight that suggested perhaps the man had truly repented.

'Well then, we may discuss the matter inside, I suppose. The street is hardly an appropriate venue after all.' Stepping aside to make way for Hannibal, Will muttered these words both to chide the man and to make excuses for himself.

'Many thanks for your understanding.'

~*~

The first year Will opened his shop, he had carefully selected a location in a bustling neighbourhood where different businesses came and went all the time without being noticed. He polished the window, laid out his worktable at the back, and set up the displays on newly repainted shelves, and paced back and forth in anticipation of his first customer.

And along came Hannibal Lecter. The man made an excuse of needing to use his restroom, and the next thing he heard was a deafening explosion from his now ruined workshop. Good thing he had put up a Silence spell just in case, otherwise he would have to explain to the Association why he had been forced to distribute Amnesia potion after his first night in business. Not to mention all the trouble with law enforcement, for the love of Moon.

'I'm truly sorry about all this. I promise that I would make it up to you, Mr. Graham.'

And that hint of smugness around the corner of his mouth convinced Will that Hannibal Lecter was anything but sorry about the incident that almost made him a disgrace.

The next day, a package made up of all the destroyed ingredients and ritual tools arrived at his doorstep when the Moon casted its cooling shadow, accompanied by a small bundle of asters tied up in black ribbon.

~*~

The second year, much to Will's dismay, Hannibal showed up at his doorstep again, dashing and immaculately dressed as always with his enigmatic smile and mouthful of florid words.

'I hope we have put the past behind us in the new season of Moon.'

'We shall see, then.'

This time, Will had made sure the restroom was out of order specifically for Hannibal. But the devil was more cunning than he had anticipated by asking for a Contraption potion compounded with Fascination, something that would definitely not be in stock for a normal potion shop. Just as he reached his underground library, the whole building was shaken by another explosion.

He stared at Hannibal in wide-eyed disbelief and burning consternation as the man again apologised for an accidental spilling and promised recompensation before disappearing into the breaking dawn.

And that time, Hannibal sent a long stalk of perfectly preserved delphinium. Blue, the colour of Will's eyes.

~*~

Fern. Gorse. Hibiscus. Magnolia.

~*~

The tenth year, when Will was on the edge of being driven into madness by Hannibal's continuing success at wrecking havoc to his shop yet another time, he took out his silver dagger and charged at Hannibal. For a moment, he forgot that back in his Academy years, he was one of the worst in any kind of combat class.

Hannibal disarmed him almost effortlessly with his dexterous, practiced move. When the weapon fell to the ground in a muffled clamp to the floor, Hannibal's lips grazed pass the side of his neck, a sense so foreign that it sent Will staggering backwards and unceremoniously barked at Hannibal.

*'Get the **fuck** out of my shop, Hannibal!'*

The action has apparently been just as startling for the normally composed man and he numbly nodded at Will's words, stumbling out of the door in a few quick strides, practically fled the scene of his crime.

That year the flower was hyacinth of regret. And the realisation suddenly came to Will that night that it was the first time he called Hannibal by his name.

~*~

'Alright, what can I get you today?' Taking a deep breath, Will returned to his usual spot behind the counter, as Hannibal pulled his lamb skin gloves off and laid them casually close to the edge of the glass surface. Yet his restlessness and impatience did not rub off on

Hannibal, as the man looked around to take in the slight changes in details of Will's new shop this year.

'You haven't told me where you will be going next, Will.'

'Perhaps I haven't decided. Sorcerers like me usually do not have much liberty in choosing the location of our post.' He tried to cut this conversation short but could not found within himself the strength to do so. Part of him was waiting, expecting, and at the same time, yearning, a fact that he would ever only admit to himself in the isolation of an early morning.

But it was never meant to be. The last a hundred years had been enough of a game to play, for him and for Hannibal. He should not be harbouring unrealistic hope for anything beyond what they had. The childish fights, awkward reconciliations hidden under formalities, the wine Hannibal sneaked into his shop just as the sun breached the barrier of night, the few occasions when he laughed at Hannibal's horrid jokes.

He traced his palm against the wave-like patterns carved into the wood, feeling their rise and fall in a bout of nostalgia. He couldn't bring himself to tell Hannibal that it would be Italy without all the pallid excuse of administrative difficulties. He practically fought with teeth and claws for that job because one time Hannibal told him that *'One day, I would like to show you Florence, Will. And the Palermo Cathedral, some of the most elegant symbols of the struggle between life and death the mortals had built.'*

'I see.' Hannibal focused his gaze onto Will as he responded curtly. When he sensed the tinge of dismay in Hannibal's tone, Will thought to himself that he must have started hearing things.

'I…' He tried to breach the topic again, to get the weight of the agonising riddle of emotions out of his chest, yet his tongue refused to move although a thousand words were circling on the top of his head. They seemed to have tumbled down into the bottomless depth of Hannibal's eyes.

And suddenly a faint sound of something exploding in a distance shattered the moment of silence. Will's immediate reflex was to glare at Hannibal despite his trance, and only frowned with confusion when he realised that his shop remained intact this time.

'Fireworks. I asked some friends to sort out the necessary paperwork. The distance was not ideal but if you could look outside the window, it should still be a decent view.' In front of him, Hannibal tilted his head slightly, explaining the final spectacle with an unusually soft tone.

And Will could indeed see them: iridescent shadows of flowers burning in a thousand sparkles against the night sky like newly made constellations.

'Italy. I will be going to Italy. Would you perhaps come with me?'

His answer was Hannibal's lips on his own, abolishing the last remnant of barrier between them, long and tender with the hint of teeth. And that was all he needed to hear.

End Notes

I had so much fun writing for this prompt! Thanks for reading. I can't wait when I got more time during my next holiday to turn this into a chaptered work ❤️

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!